LEGEND (Olhughanu)

"ENZUKU N' OMUTHOMA W'ABAYIRA"

Bayira origins: There are many traditional theories explaining the history and origins of the Bayira. When I talk of the Bayira I mean the Bakonzo in Uganda and the Banande in the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, the former Zaire. The Bayira are a Bantu-speaking people. It is an ethnic group living majorly in western Uganda and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In Uganda the Bayira are called Bakonzo and in the Democratic Republic of Congo they are called Banande. These are nicknames acquired after the partition of Africa by colonialists. The Bayira – Bakonzo and Banande are one people who wherever they live, share similar mode of traditions, values, beliefs, norms, feelings, festivals, language and therefore culture.

Friends, I am Nyakango, I am going to tell a legend (Olhughanu) about **Bayira origins:** that the five undermentioned very elderly people whom I met face to face while they were still alive, told me. Omusyakulhu Paul Kibwana born 1842 and passed on 1991. Omusyakulhu Mughongo Matholi born 1862 and passed on 1997. Omusyakulhu Deku, born 1898 and passed on 2014. Omukekulu Bamwithaghe Nzirambi Nyabahasa born 1903 and passed on 2011. Omusyakulhu Eriya Kalubenge, born 1910 and passed on 2015.

These old people's legend support the traditional theory that describes the origin of Yira the legendary Ancestor of the Bayira, and Kitara Region as the legendary Cradle Land of the Bayira. According to the five people mentioned above, Kibwana call the Bayira ancestor as Yira-Yira LyaHangyi, Mughongo call him Yira-Yira, and Bamwithaghe call him Yira LyaHangyika while Kalubenge call him Yira LyaHangyi. All these names according to this legend refer to one man, **Yira** the legendary ancestor of the Bayira. This is a mythology (Legend-olhughano), around Yira's origin**,** through the oral traditions from the Rwenzori region across the border of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It asserts that:

Once upon a time, there was a man called Yira who lived alone in a cave and a grass thatched hat in a region he named *Kitara*. He was believed to have been the first man to be found in *Kitara* region. Yira was not born but considered super-human with divine powers. He hunted wild animals, birds and collected fruits for food.

One day Yira went hunting a bird on the *Kyitara ky'olhubwe lhwa nzururu* (the Rwenzori Mountains), whose white snow blocks shined like a big lamp). When he was hunting the bird, it flew and parched on some tree somewhere. He followed the bird and discovered a beautiful girl. Yira found a stunning girl sited under the tree on which the bird he was hunting had parched. He admired the girl because she was really beautiful. The girl had three bracelets known as *emiseghe* on her left hand. Yira requested for one of her bracelets and she accepted. The girl then

put the bracelet on Yira's right hand. When Yira was about to ask for her names, the girl disappeared instead an old man with a long grey beard instantly appeared at the very spot the girl was sited. The old man stood supported on a walking stick. Yira, shocked with fear, stared at the old man. The old man smiled abit and then asked Yira why he had requested for one of her daughter's bracelets. Yira, with fear and respect, knelt down and requested the old man to allow him marry his daughter. The old man laughed gave Yira some testing what the Bayira term as *ebirengesyo*, in order to give him his daughter.

1. **The first test was for Yira to guess the name of the girl. The old man told Yira he would come to visit him the next day to get the answer to the first exam.**

Yira was disturbed because he did not know her name. He lived alone in the whole region. There was no one to help him find the name. He spent a sleepless night thinking of what to tell the old man. When Yira was about to wake up early morning the next day, a bird came and parched on his hat and started singing. Yira was awakened by the bird's singing. The bird sang that:

"Yira buka! Yira buka wubiray'obuthalha-aa Mughole asyasangana wunayiretho-ooh". Meaning - Yira wake up! Yira wake up and clean the compound Mughole shouldn't find you asleep.

Yira jumped out of his bed and went outside the hat to listen carefully to the bird. The bird repeated its song the second time and Yira picked the name Mughole from the bird's song. When he closely looked at the bird, Yira was shocked to discover that it was the bird he had wanted to kill for food. The bird repeated its song the third time and flew away. As soon as the bird finished singing, the girl appeared in Yira's compound. When Yira went to receive her, the girl disappeared and instead the old man appeared at the very spot where she was standing and asked Yira the name of his daughter. Yira told him, she was called Mughole. The old man nodded his head in agreement.

2. **The old man gave Yira a second test of searching to find the old man's daughter who had disappeared. Yira was given seven days to search and find the girl.**

Yira was troubled. He didn't know where to search from and what to do to find 'Mughole.' When he was thinking of where to find the girl, the same bird that helped him to know girl's name came and parched on one of the trees in Yira's compound and started singing that:

"Eee.Mwale w'omwame x2 kanimuhotholi w'endara.eeh. Wuwatheyo! Wuwatheyo ayitsyadire omombugha.eeh." Meaning the Princess is a xylophone dancer. Play it so that she jumps into the dancing arena.

Yira listened carefully to the bird's song to get its meaning. The bird sang the song three times and Yira was able to know what to do in order to find Mughole, who was a Princess according to the song. He immediately made a xylophone, played it. As he played the xylophone, Yira was surprised it realise that some other invisible beings he didn't know were helping him to play it, for a xylophone is not played by one person. And some other being was drumming as it is always accompany a xylophone. On the sixth day, two identical female twins appeared in the dancing arena. They danced together. They all looked like the very girl Yira found sited under a tree. One of them was the very girl the old man wanted Yira to search for but Yira did not recognise her. As Yira watched the two girls, the old man appeared. He looked at his daughters dancing and then turned, looked at Yira and smiled. He then told Yira that he had passed the second test.

3. **Yira was given the third and final test of selecting his wife from amongst the old man's identical twins. Yira was not given time to think of what to do.**

The two twins were identical, dressed in the same style with same colours. They had same hair style. They made similar gestures and movements while dancing. This really made it difficult for Yira to identify his fiancée. The old man told Yira that if he failed to identify her, he would take his daughters away and never Yira to see them again. Yira panicked, he then started looking around to see whether his magic bird was near him for help, but it was nowhere to be seen. When Yira keenly looked at their left arms, he realised that one of the twins had only two bracelets instead of three like the other one. Yira then remembered that she was the girl who had given him one of her bracelets. Happily, Yira jumped into the dancing arena and danced with the two twins concurrently, then he put off the bracelets and put it on Mughole's left arm, as a sign of identifying her. He passed the final exam and the old man allowed Yira to go with his daughter Mughole as wife.

Yira with his wife Mughole, had three sons, Kayira (meaning small child of Yira) Ntemburi (meaning pioneer). The second son was named Kakama Mbimburi. The name Kakama was derived from the word erikama, meaning to brew, not the kakama related to being a leader omukama. Mbumburi meaning discoverer. This name is derived from the word eribumbura meaning to discover. Kakama was responsible for brewing beer for the father and discovering more regions. And third son was named Kahima Mbinguri. The name Kahima is derived from the word obuhima, the place where sacrifice is made, not the Kahuma related to being a herdsman. Yira was a friend to God. He made sacrifice to him, and it was his son Kahima who was responsible for sacrifice making. The name Mbinguri was derived from the word embingu which is an animal horn in which witch doctors put medicinal herbs and use it as a communication gargdet with the world of spirits. Kahima was also responsible for security. Yira had many descendants, who are all believed to be the first inhabitants of Kitara region, the legendary cradle land of the Bayira. Yira and Mughole never died but just disappeared into the kitara kyolhubwe lhwanzururu, the Rwenzori Mountains" **End**!